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The Director of Central Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

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18 June 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

THROUGH: Vice Chairman, National Intelligence Council
Chairman, National Intelligence Council

FROM: Fritz W. Ermarth
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SUBJECT: Summit Speculations ... The Soviet Side

1. The balloonlet of speculation about summit prospects launched last week by Senators Baker and Percy, the President's press conference, and the Central Committee's spokesman Zamyatin seems destined to float just a bit longer and then descend back to earth. Soviet media comment over the weekend continues the tone and substance of previous weeks: Washington's talk about dialogue is pure electioneering; there is absolutely no US action conducive to movement even on the urgent matter of ASAT; the Soviet side continues to make realistic proposals to no avail.

2. Short of US concessions that are hardly conceivable, Moscow is extremely unlikely to deliver a summit and its attendant political benefits to the Administration before the November elections. [REDACTED]

3. Nevertheless, the Soviets have contributed enough hints of movement to warrant speculation as to whether they are toying with a tactical shift in their policy toward the US. In addition to Zamyatin's comment to journalists following the CEMA summit, junior diplomats in Belgrade and Leningrad have made tantalizing remarks about the need for movement on arms control, despite the deadlock over INF. None of this is for internal consumption so far.

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4. Soviet leaders are probably under increasing pressure to show more tactical flexibility on US-Soviet relations. Their complete unwillingness to see anything promising in Washington's professed readiness to talk has gradually cast an image in the West that Moscow, not Washington, is the problem. Although their negative stance has put pressure on the President (e.g., the Senators' intervention), his responses have portrayed him as the patient statesman. Soviet tactics have cost him little and may, in the net, have helped him. In any case, one suspects that this assessment has been presented to Soviet leaders by some in the Soviet foreign affairs bureaucracy. They have certainly been pressed for more flexible policies toward the West by their East European allies, from whom they wish to elicit new displays of unity.

5. The Soviets may have decided that they need to play a little more positively into the general political desire for some sign of improvement in East-West relations. First, they may believe they must sound more willing to seek improvement, without conceding anything positive in US motives. If the Soviets are to derive even minimal benefit from the present phase of US-Soviet relations the blame must clearly rest on Washington. They may wish, further, to revive somewhat an atmosphere in which Washington tries harder to come up with concessions or initiatives that might move the relationship, or falls into politically unseemly dispute over them.

6. For a variety of reasons, the whole complex of ASAT-ABM-SDI developments taking place in the US at present have an unusual urgency in the Soviet perspective. They are clearly seen by Moscow as having a long-term potential to put the Soviets at a major strategic disadvantage. The Soviets may, as a consequence, try exploiting the political pressures of an election year to get a handle on them. It is not surprising, therefore, that ASAT specifically and "militarization of space" are now at the forefront of Soviet propaganda campaigning.

7. Other factors in Soviet calculations may be expected turns in the Antonov and Sakharov cases. Although these sources of very bad press for the Soviets may linger for many months, it would be characteristic of Soviet leaders to believe that a hint of thaw in East-West relations could blunt the political effect at what they may know to be a critical juncture.

8. Throughout the last six months, the Soviets have continued to keep the door of dialogue just barely ajar. The best evidence of this is the Chernenko-Reagan correspondence: It is evidently continuing and, while unyielding on substance, is non-polemical in tone and, at times, designed to be appealing and persuasive.

9. Whether it was partly contrived by the Soviets, or purely happenstance, whether it rests on tactical recalculations already made or in progress ... the current speculation about summitry and progress in US-Soviet relations presents the Soviet leadership with a slightly new situation. Are they willing to "play along" for a time? If so, for how

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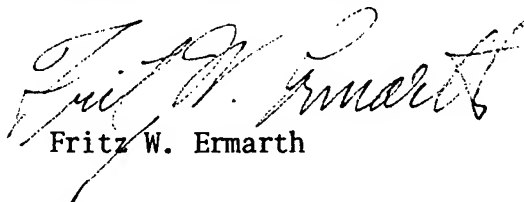
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long? More basically, are they willing to give the US president the political benefit of the prospect of some improvement in the relationship in return for talks about what will appear to them very modest semi-steps in the ASAT area?

10. On balance the answer is probably negative. They would not expect to get something dramatic from the President before the elections that would prove unavailable later. The odds, therefore, favor a series of quick and explicit rebuffs to the current summit speculations.

11. Should the Soviets let these speculations continue or actually stimulate them, then it is likely that they have made another tactical calculation: To attempt contriving over the next few months a scenario of buildup and collapse of Western public expectations. In this case the Soviet aim would be to let optimism about East-West improvement grow for a time, then present conditions for real progress acceptable to many in the West but not the Administration (e.g., an INF moratorium, or possibly a stop to US ASAT tests as the price of talks on ASAT and other arms issues), and attempt in a more convincing way to blame the US on the eve of November for another "lost opportunity."

12. The evidence continues to suggest that the Soviet leadership is not in condition to decide on a major shift in the direction of East-West relations at present. The most it can probably manage are some small tactical adjustments in a highly political season. If the Soviets can control the results of such adjustments at all, they are very unlikely to be of benefit to Washington.


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